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Jacksonville District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases draft report for public review

San Juan, P.R. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District announced today that a draft Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) report is available for public review and comment. Comments will be accepted until Aug. 24, 2006.

The report was prepared following an investigation of Flamenco Beach on Culebra and the beaches on Isla Culebrita which addressed the presence of military munitions and explosives of concern. The island of Culebra and the surrounding cays were used for munitions training by the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps in the early to mid-1900s, and remaining munitions are being addressed under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites (DERP-FUDS). The Corps' top priority in DERP-FUDS is protection of human health and the environment.

The intent of the EE/CA, which was prepared in close coordination with the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal and local agencies, was to evaluate the presence of munitions on approximately 21.5 acres of surface ground in Flamenco Beach and Isla Culebrita, to evaluate the potential risks to human health and the environment due to the presence of munitions, and to recommend the most realistic and cost-effective approach for reducing the risk of exposure to munitions items.

The EE/CA investigation evaluated four alternatives for addressing existing munitions, and recommended clearance to depth of detection. It is proposed that ordnance experts examine approximately 21.5 acres of surface ground in Flamenco Beach and Isla Culebrita to determine whether unexploded ordnance are still present in the area. If detected, the experts will dispose of the items in question. This provides a permanent long-term solution and a high level of public safety protection by removing both surface and subsurface munitions and explosives of concern. It is both technically and administratively achievable and is likely to receive support from all stakeholders.

The draft EE/CA is available for public review at: (1) Public information repository in the Municipality of Culebra, Office of the Mayor (2) Culebra school library, (3) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Antilles Office, 400 Fernandez Juncos, San Juan, and (4) PR Environmental Quality Board Office in San Juan.

Comments should be received by Thurs., Aug. 24, 2006, addressed to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Ricardo Vazquez, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, Fla. 32207-8175 or by electronic mail at:

Ricardo.r.vazquez@usace.army.mil.

The public is reminded that, should they discover a suspected ordnance item, it should not be touched or moved. The Corps' advises noting and notifying local law enforcement authorities of the location of the item. Only qualified ordnance experts should handle munitions.

For questions or further information, please call Elsa Jimenez of the Corporate Communication Office at 787-723-0133.

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